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United for Quality Care

March 9th, 2023
District 1199 New England
Before the Labor and
Public Employees Committee

In Support of **SB1177 AN ACT CONCERNING ONE FAIR WAGE.**

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Labor Committee. District 1199NE represents 26,000 healthcare workers in both the public and private sector in Connecticut. This includes approximately 7,000 nursing home employees, 6,500 State employees, 2,500 group home employees, and 10,000 Medicaid waiver personal care attendants. We submit this testimony in support of SB 1177.

In 2019 Connecticut took a step towards addressing systemic poverty by passing Public Act 19-4, which increased the minimum wage and put Connecticut on course to have a minimum wage of \$15 per hour by 2023. Not only did this legislation uplift minimum wage workers across the state, but it also served as an economic engine driving demand. Unfortunately a major workforce, approximately 70,000 people, were left behind - tipped workers.

Employers of tipped workers across the state have been allowed to pay their employees as little as \$6.38 per hour, which is only 42% of the minimum wage. While some tipped workers are able to earn enough in tips to offset this disparity, they are the exception not the rule. The impact of this unsustainable wage dynamic is disproportionately felt by women, who make up 70% of tipped workers in the state. Additionally, 90% of female tipped workers have experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault in the workplace and 60% of transgender workers report experiencing “scary” or “unwanted” sexual behavior from customers. Increasing the subminimum wage is not only smart economic policy but a matter of gender equality.

With over one third of tipped workers being people of color, increasing the subminimum wage is also a matter of racial justice. Tipped work originated during the reconstruction era in the after the civil war and is a product of institutional racism

that has persisted to this day. Connecticut has a moral obligation to address this injustice.

SB 1177 will not only be a boon to Connecticut's economy, but will address pervasive racial, gender, and economic inequities that exist across the state. This committee has the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of Connecticut resident's lives. Please do the right thing by your constituents and pass SB 1177.